

October 14, 2007

“The Fruit of the Spirit: Kindness”  
Galatians 5:22-23

FCF: Absence of and hunger for “kindness” in this world

**PROPOSITION:** (anchor) Because kindness is the fruit of the Spirit,  
(magnet) we must look to the Spirit to cultivate kindness in our lives.

**SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:**

From “The Roanoke Times” ([READ IV2 – “Love’s Disarming Power”](#)):

*On April 6, 2000, Ricky and Toni Sexton were taken hostage inside their Wytheville, Virginia, home by a fugitive couple on a crime spree. Toni had taken her poodle outside when Dennis Lewis, 37, and Angela Tanner, 20, roared into her driveway, pointed pistols at her, and yelled at her to get back inside the house. Inside the house, the Sextons turned their hostage experience into an opportunity to demonstrate Christian love.*

*The Sextons listened to their captors' troubles, fed them, showed them gospel videos, read to them from the Bible, and prayed and cried with them. During negotiations with the police, Ricky Sexton refused his own release when Lewis and Tanner suggested that they might end the standoff by committing suicide. The standoff had an unusual ending. Before surrendering to the police, Angela Tanner left \$135 and a note for the Sextons that read: "Thank you for your hospitality. We really appreciate it. I hope he gets better. Wish all luck & love. Please accept this. It really is all we have to offer. Love, Angela and Dennis."*

What do we make of this? Could it be that there is such an absence of and hunger for kindness in this world that, when we find it, it completely undoes and disarms us?

**SCRIPTURE READING:** [Galatians 5:16-26](#)

**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

**SERMON INTRODUCTION:**

Author and Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel recalls in his book, [All Rivers Run to the Sea](#), how he became a U.S. citizen in the days after WWII ([READ 750 Illustrations](#)):

*I was working in New York City as a correspondent for a French newspaper when my travel permit expired. At the French consulate I was informed that the document could be validated only in France. I didn't have enough money to go back there, and I was anxiously wondering whether I would be deported from America. I went to the U.S. Immigration office, where an official smiled and said, "Why don't you become a U.S. Resident? Then later you can apply for citizenship." I stared at him. Could I actually become an American citizen?*

*It is hard to put into words how much I owe that kindly immigration official, especially when I recall my annual visits to the Prefecture de Police in Paris, with its long lines and humiliating interrogations. The refugee's time is measured in visas, his biography in stamps on his documents, there is nothing romantic about life in exile.*

*In later years, a high official asked whether I would like to have French nationality. Though I thanked him, I declined the offer. When I needed a passport, it was America that gave me one.*

The point? People go where they are welcome. The connection to Galatians 5? That sense of welcome and kindness had been lost in the Galatian church. A new teaching had swept through – a teaching emphasizing works in addition to faith, human effort supplementing the Spirit’s power, merit as opposed to grace. And with it, like a slow spreading infection, pride, arrogance, boasting, and divisions. Little wonder Paul said ([READ Galatians 1:8-9; 5:11-12](#)). By grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone – that is the good news of the gospel. Our standing with God is secure. Our new life in Christ is real. And it clears the way for great change – for each and all of us.

The fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, and kindness. It is His work, His doing, His promise that He will work such things in us. And so we look to Him.

**I. EXAMINING KINDNESS**

Even a cursory look, a simple examination of what kindness entails, shows us we need the Spirit to bring this about. What, after all, is kindness? Frankly, it’s easier to

illustrate than to define. Each aspect of the fruit is related, overlapping in some cases. “Love is kind.” Kindness and goodness are so close, it’s difficult to separate them.

*A) False Fruit*

1. What it looks like

That said, it’s clear there is a false fruit – a pleasantness, a generosity of gifts or service.

2. What’s behind it

Yet all the while, governed by a desire to manipulate, to control or coerce.

*Illustration:*

The Bible shows us this. Case in point, Jacob gave Esau some stew only to steal his birthright. Delilah spoke words of love to Samson only to rob him of his power as a judge in Israel. There is such a thing as a false kindness of which we need to beware.

*B) True Fruit*

That said, there is nonetheless the true fruit of kindness.

1. What it looks like

An inner disposition that shows itself in outer actions of words or deeds. An awareness of others and their needs. A willingness and freedom to step in, to reach in, and help.

2. What’s behind it

And what’s behind it? A selflessness, sincerity, genuineness that gives without strings.

*Application:*

Overcoming then what would extinguish such kindness, pulling the weeds that threaten to choke this fruit, we must look to the Spirit. It will never happen, it will not come in our strength. In fact, one of the weeds is the foolish presumption we can work this up if we just try hard enough. We can want it. We should want it. But kindness is the fruit of the Spirit. And so we have to depend upon Him to bring this about.

## **II. EXPERIENCING KINDNESS**

An honest examination of kindness shows us that. So too does a consideration of what it means to experience kindness. Where, after all, does kindness come from?

*A) Towards All Peoples*

From the kindness of God. First, the kindness of God towards all peoples.

1. Providing for our needs

He is the provider of our needs. The psalmist writes (*READ LXX Psalm 145:8-9*). Jesus taps into this theme in the Sermon on the Mount (*READ Matthew 5:44-45*).

2. Provoking us towards repentance

We depend upon the LORD for all we have and are – whether we know it or not. In fact, this provision for our needs is meant to provoke us to repentance (*READ Romans 2:4*).

*B) Towards His People*

But, of course, the LORD’s kindness becomes more specific, more intense, more personal when we consider His ways towards His people, towards followers of Christ.

1. Sparing us what we deserved

For in His kindness, He has spared us what we deserved (*READ Ephesians 2:4-7*). It is out of His kindness God has saved us in Christ. (*READ Titus 3:4-5a*) This is our hope.

2. Spurring us on

The kindness of God has spared us what we deserved and now serves to spur us on – grounding us in humility. Lest Gentile Christians were to get uppity in their view of the Jewish people, Paul wrote (*READ Romans 11:22*). God’s kindness spurs us on in humility. And in worship (*READ LXX translations of Psalm 100:5; Psalm 107:1*).

The point being that the experience of God's kindness is meant to be expressed.

*Illustration:*

The movie "Pay It Forward" is about a seventh grader's plan to make a difference in the world. Trevor and his classmates are challenged by their teacher, Mr. Simonet. "Think of an idea to change our world – and put it into action." The other students stare blankly. Trevor is mesmerized. On the way home, he sees a homeless man. Trevor offers him a place to sleep in the family garage. His mother, not knowing of this, goes into the garage one evening and discovers their guest. The man has fixed her broken-down pickup. (READ quote) "Somebody comes along like your son and gives me a leg up, I'll take it. I can't mess up again, or I'll be dead. I'm just paying it forward."

*Application:*

The experience of God's kindness is meant to be expressed. Overcoming then what would extinguish such kindness, pulling the weeds that threaten to choke this fruit, we must look to the Spirit. What does that look like? Remembering we were once wandering, wondering if all this was real, if there was any hope for us. And now looking to Him, longing to express something of our life's gratitude to Him. Think back to where you've been. Consider where, outside of His kindness, you would likely be. The more we meditate on such things, the more we see the Spirit working this kindness into us.

### **III. EXPRESSING KINDNESS**

Which takes me to our third point. Once we've examined this kindness and begun to experience it, we then (as we've already begun to explore) need to express it.

#### *A) From All Peoples*

This kindness has been shown to and should be then expressed by all peoples.

##### 1. Made in His image

For we are all made in the image, according to the likeness, of a kind God. Which is to say, we are most what we are meant to be, never more human, than when we are kind.

##### 2. Dependent upon His care

We are made in His image and dependent upon His care. He has been kind and His desire is that we would respond to that – all of us. He is looking for it. This is part of the sobering assessment Paul gives of the human race (READ Romans 3:10b-12).

#### *B) From His People*

He is looking for kindness from us all. That said, but most especially from His people. Not surprisingly, the more we have experienced, the more should be expressed.

##### 1. To all

Look back with me to the Sermon on the Mount. This is exactly Jesus' point in saying we are to be kind to all just as our Father has been (READ Matthew 5:44-47).

##### 2. To one another

But then going even beyond that, not only are we to be kind to all but most especially kind to one another, kind to our brothers and sisters in Christ (READ Colossians 3:12).

The kindness of God has been poured out upon us that it might pour through us into the lives of others – all of us no matter what might set us apart or make us feel small.

*Illustration:*

(READ 750 Illustrations):

*One of the great heartbreaks of the 1988 Winter Olympics was the story of speed skater Dan Jansen. Just hours before his race he received the news that his sister, who had been fighting leukemia for more than a year, had just died. Bearing the weight of his sorrow, Dan laced on his skates to race for his sister. When the gun sounded, he sprinted from the starting line, only to slip*

*and fall in the first turn. Four days later, in the 1,000-meter race, he fell again. The whole country mourned with him.*

*Many Americans sent Dan letters of consolation. According to Sports Illustrated, not long after returning home, Jansen received a letter from Mark Arrowood, a disabled thirty-year-old from Doylestown, Pennsylvania. Mark wrote:*

*Dear Dan, I watched you on TV. I'm sorry that you fell 2 times. I am in the Special Olympics. I won a gold medal at Pa. State Summer Olympics right after my Dad died seven years ago...Before we start the games we have a saying that goes like this. "Let me win but if I can't win let me be brave in the attempt."...I want to share one of my gold medals with you because I don't like to see you not get one. Try again in four more years.*

*Inside the envelope, Dan Jansen found a gold medal that Mark Arrowood had won in a track-and-field event.*

#### *Application:*

We have a lot to learn from Mark Arrowood. More than we know. That we might then overcome all that would extinguish such kindness, pulling the weeds that would choke this fruit, we must look to the Spirit that He would enable us to overcome our false modesty. Yes, the Scriptures clearly declare the depravity of man. We are broken and twisted inside. But we each have value. And we each have something to give, to offer, some means of being kind. And when asked, "*Why are you doing this?*" all we have to say is, "*God has been so kind to me and I just want to share it with you.*"

#### **CONCLUSION:**

I've told a few stories. I have one more. Like I said, kindness is in many ways easier to illustrate than to explain and define. Some of you may remember Jim Bakker, the former televangelist tried and imprisoned for his financial dealings. This was a huge scandal, a real embarrassment within evangelical circles. Jim Bakker was persona non grata. Listen to his story of the events immediately after his release ([READ IV2](#)):

*When I was transferred to my last prison, Franklin [Graham] said he wanted to help me out when I got out—with a job, a house to live in, and a car. It was my fifth Christmas in prison. I thought it over and said, "Franklin, you can't do this. It will hurt you. The Grahams don't need my baggage." He looked at me and he said, "Jim, you were my friend in the past and you are my friend now. If anyone doesn't like it, I'm looking for a fight."*

*So when I got out of prison the Grahams sponsored me and paid for a house for me to live in and gave me a car to drive. The first Sunday out, Ruth Graham called the halfway house I was living in at the Salvation Army and asked permission for me to go to the Montreat Presbyterian Church with her that Sunday morning. When I got there, the pastor welcomed me and sat me with the Graham family. There were like two whole rows of them—I think every Graham aunt and uncle and cousin was there. The organ began playing and the place was full except for a seat next to me. Then the doors opened and in walked Ruth Graham. She walked down that aisle and sat next to inmate 07407-058. I had only been out of prison 48 hours, but she told the world that morning that Jim Bakker was her friend.*

*Afterwards, she had me up to their cabin for dinner. When she asked me for some addresses, I pulled this envelope out of my pocket to look for them—in prison you're not allowed to have a wallet, so you just carry an envelope. She asked, "Don't you have a wallet?" And I said, "Well, yeah, this is my wallet." After five years of brainwashing in prison you think an envelope is a wallet. She walked into the other room and came back and said, "Here's one of Billy's wallets. He doesn't need it. You can have it."*

That is the kindness of which Paul is speaking here – a kindness experienced and expressed, embraced and extended, flowing into and through one child of God to another without keeping score or doing the math. It is the fruit of the Spirit. It is what we are called to show forth. Let us go now to the Lord and ask Him to bring it forth from us.

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